"OLD WHIT"

Of Company D, Twelfth West Virginia Infantry,

WRITES AN INTERESTING LETTER

To His Old Comrades who will Meet in West Alexander To-day---Some Very Timely Reminders of Things That Happened Thirty Years Ago in the Mountains of Virginia and West Virginia---Some Well Remembered Names Mentioned.

KINGSTON, NEW MEXICO, Aug. 10.—A few days ago I received an invitation, as it was termed, to attend the annual reunion of Company D, Twelfth West Virginia, at West Alexander, Pa. I would need no invitation did time and circumstances permit. These annual reunions will not last long. I find that with some of us the silver is coming into our hair faster than it is into our pockets as we near the golden shore.

The other day I met an old soldier who was with us the time we had our first baptism of war under Milroy at Winchester, when Emmett Buchanan was "killed," and when we laid down our knapsacks to make a charge on the rebels. We never did that but once. The next day the Johnnies invited us over to take dinner with them and get our knapsacks. We did not go, although we needed them badly afterwards in wandering through the mountains of Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania before we reached Bedford, Pa. Who remembers Lizzie Filmore Roukes, who guided us along North mountain, after leaving Winchester.

I saw in the INTELLIGENCER some time since an invitation from Lieut. Hewitt, of Co. I., to send him matter for a history of the regiment. Almost any soldier could furnish him enough to fill a volume, if he had the time to write it. I think the best posted number of our company, or the one who can relate the most incidents, and get out the most marches and engagement of the regiment is Richard J. Vermillion. I spent one of the most enjoyable nights with him when last east, I ever spent in going out the war again. If Lieut. Hewitt will call on him at Valley Grove he will get enough from him to fill company D's share of the volume.

Dick has a wonderfully correct memory of dates and facts. But I should not want it to go into the history how he, Giff Frazier, Pete Yarnell and myself got away from the command in the Cumberland Valley, played out as we were by constant marching after and before the battle of Gettsburg, and how we lived for several days without any rations, except what we could "forage," which consisted of berries, cherries, bread, milk, eggs, butter, &c., &c., from the farm houses. Worn out, disheartened, galled, emaciated from diarrhea, foot sore, and suffering with everything that ever befell a soldier, even lousy, that trip cured us up, and we joined the regiment as new men. Dick can tell how we were straggling along one day past the camp of some 100 day men, from New York. When they began to call to us, "close up," they did not call very long. We gave them a pointer on "closing up," they had not yet gotten on to.

When we first went out the instructions were very strict to disturb no private property, and the stray pig or chicken we got had to be obtained without any demurrer from the victim in the way of a squeal or a squawk, and at our risk of getting into the guard house. The boys remember the night we camped, I think near Philippi. Captain Prichard, of Compan F, was officer of the guard, and he instructed us to take nothing, not even a rail from the fence or a hen from the roost. When we had all got quietly in camp, suddenly a calf began to bawl near Company D, who were great foragers, you know, particularly mess No. 4, and it was immediately supposed that Company D intended to have veal for breakfast, and Captain Prichard came running in from where he was posting the guard with "Hold on boys!" while we could hear in coarse whispers, "Knock it in the head," "Cut its throat," when a voice that could be heard all over the valley came from the throat of one of Company F's non-commissioned officers: "We are holding on, captain." It seems that he and his messmates had the calf by the tail and legs. I think the calf died in the struggle and Company D felt relieved, that the death of the calf could not be laid to their charge, and we could hear the captain expostulating with the boys and the big corporal excusing himself by saying: "I was not going to allow any darned calf to run over me." It seems the calf had been the aggressor, and had left its Southern mother and had came into the Union camp under cover of the darkness—a loyal calf that—and ran over some of sleeping Company F.

Before the war was over orders to save private property were not so strict. On the Hunter raid and Sheridan's last march up the valley it was not safe for a calf or a rail to be loose, and our orders were to use all the rails we could. Make ourselves comfortable. That was war and that was the way to end it. Since the war, I have stopped several times with Col. R. W. Baylor, whose rails we burned just before Sheridan "sent them whirling through Winchester," and he related how he replaced his rails and refenced his farm by paying five cents a rail and hauling them thirty miles; not a small job on a three hundred acre farm, with four old condemned United States horses. He brought out of the war two horses, with which he did his ploughing. One of them had been shot through and one of the Colonel's sons was killed off him, and the Colonel remarked that that old horse had heard more Yankee bullets whistle than any horse alive. He was twenty-four years of age when I rode behind him in the Colonel's carriage from his house to the railroad station at Summit Point. The old horse would go wild at the sight of a blue coat.

Col. R. W. Baylor did all he could himself to whip the "blue coats"—was sentenced to be hung once; and the rope was around his neck; and was once shot through the body, yet accepted the results of the war when over. I have ridden over several battlefields with him, where he and I were on opposite sides. "Here," he would say, "we gave you Yankees h—," and well I knew it. He was a warm friend of Gen. B. F. Kelley, and was with him in that memorable ride out of Cumberland, recently related in the INTELLIGENCER. He said he "pitied the old man, it was a wonder it did not kill him." That little ride, unpleasant as it was, made warm friends of all engaged, to which Judge Melvin can testify, as I believe he is one of the survivors, if not the only one.

The 12th was often fortunate in getting what they thought was a hard position, and escaping a harder one. For instance, at the battle of Winchester, our brigade was chosen to guard the supplies, a perilous position, on account of Mosby's and Gilmore's bands—but had we been in line of battle, our position was the most perilous on the field, oak trees at the front being literally cut off with rifle balls.

So we escaped Cedar Creek a month later on the memorable 19th of September. They kept us trotting up and down the valley, guarding supply trains to the front, and we camped at Winchester, when the Johnies surprised the boys at 3 in the morning, and instead of going up front we were put in line across the pike to keep the stragglers back, who began to come in by noon and reported everything all torn to pieces. I remember my feelings at that time. Now, thought I, after all our hard fighting and marching up and down the vally, until we knew the valley pike as well as some of us knew the Old Cumberland road from Wheeling to West Alexander, It will all have to be gone over again, and I was tired fighting and marching. Leaning on my musket with these gloomy feeling, which were made worse by every squad of stragglers that came, suddenly Phil Sheridan and three or four of his staff came riding up the pike from the direction of Winchester. He stopped at our line and talked a short time with the officers in charge, and to some of the stragglers, pulled the rim of the small black hat he wore over his forehead, and turning to the members of his staff quietly remarked, "Come on, boys," and he started up the pike like a black thunder-bolt, which he proved to be, for it did not seem long until the cannonading began and graduolly grew longer, deeper, deadlier than before, and by the grace of God and Phil Sheridan's help we did not have to fight that ground over again.

We were a day late in that fight. The next day we would have had our old position in line, which was taken by a Wisconsin regiment, whose "Co. D" lost nearly half the men in it.

I think we made some desperate charges. How about Piedmont when the ground had been charged over three times, and the 12th West Virginia was brought up to charge the angle, or center of the rebel position. It was trying to creep up through that clover field, lie down a moment, to receive the enemy's fire, then up and at them, without firing a shot. We got them, took twice as many prisoners as we ourselves numbered—but we lost Joe Halstead, Alex Gilmore, Bob Anderson and Wesley Hamilton, dead, and others wounded. Bob Anderson would not lie down in the clover field, but stood up and kept loading and firing. He was not killed then, but was later on, when they turned on us and tried to drive us back. I was lying alongside Wes. Hamilton, and when we were ordered up to charge he did not rise. I punched him, saying, "Wes., get up." He did not. I found out afterward that he was shot dead, the ball entering his head, an easy way to die. Poor Joe Halstead, as brave a boy as ever bore the colors, (he was regimental color bearer)—his heart's blood ebbed his life away.

I have been over the ground since and picked out the clover field and the woods into which we charged. There was not a tree the size of a man but had a dozen bullet holes in it. I picked out the spot where I slept between two dead rebels that night, to keep the wind off me; had a rebel, who had been in the fight, show me around; filled my pockets with apples from his orchard, and spent two hours with him in talking of our marches; and, by the way, it is much more interesting to talk with one of the boys on the other side than to talk among ourselves of the late war.

Who remembers the Saturday night of April 1, 1865, before we made the charge on Fort Gregg? Joshua Reynolds was killed that day. While we were building entrenchments and keeping up a hell of a shooting, literally until our guns got so hot we could not hold them. As darkness came on, accompanied with fog and a misting rain, we were ordered to throw away our tin plates, cups and everything that would make a rattle, and were marched and massed six columns deep toward the front, where we could hear the rebels talk around their camp fires. We did not relieve ourselves of any extra accoutrements as at Winchester. A more cold, chilly, indescribable night I never passed through. Before daylight we were ordered up, and before noon we were in front of Fort Gregg, near Petersburgh, watching two unsuccessful charges. It was not a pleasant sight that Sunday morning to see men marched up to be cut down like grass before the mower, while we stood there in plain view of the two unsuccessful attempts to capture that historic fort, the last, I believe of the war. To witness a scene of this kind is hard. To make a charge on the enemy without knowing what we have to encounter is hard enough, but to make a charge on the enemy's works when we had witnessed the previous attempts to take them, in which men had seemed to do all that men could do, was certainly the hardest of war's work.

We were ordered forward from the low hill on which we had been drawn in line of battle. There was a lull in the firing. The groans of the wounded alone filled the air. The other forts back of Fort Gregg, who had got the range and were helping the boys in the fort, were quiet now, waiting our next move. We crossed the ravine, marched up the slope. Our alignment was not as correct as when we gave the zouave drill in front of the court house in Wheeling, after the return from the war, but we went up that hill as promptly as ever we marched to the dinner table at a Sunday school picnic, although Fort Gregg was sending out its grape and canister. The surrounding forts were dropping their shot and bursting shell among us, while the rifle balls with their quick whistle and thud struck death into many a brave heart. The ground was soon thickly strewn with blue coats. I passed Jim Caldwell and Bill Ross struck down with grape shot, but the fort was soon ours.

It is quite a walk from the Baltimore & Ohio depot at West Alexander, where some of the boys will get off on the 14th to go into town, but not as far as up the hill to Fort Gregg, and yet made quicker time, and this last thirty feet was nearly perpendicular with a rifle ball or a bayonet on top, for those who had the temerity to first enter the fort. Then Joe Caldwell, of Company A, was struck down. He was one of our Williamsport squad, and it did seem to me that while we had a very pleasant time that winter doing provost duty that we would all be killed before the war was over. Joe Lyons, of Company I, was killed at Piedmont, and so down to Caldwell.

It was hard marching through Virginia the next week, but all was repaid the next Sunday morning at Appomattox, when we looked around the ruin of that amphitheatre and could see the stars and stripes crossing every field and emerging from every strip of woods all around the circle, and the gray coats stacking arms in the valley with General Lee and staff advancing under a flag of truce to the little farm house in the orchard.

But I have written much more than the space allowed myself—in a rambling, broken way—mixing the light with the dark. It was so in the war. We all remember how dark and gloomy it was before Richmond, and about the hour of

"Ha! Jim-a-long—Jim-a-long, Josey,
Ha! Jim-a-long—Jim-a-long, Joe," &c.

(The sick call).

when the sick were paraded out and the deserters for a time were taken out front every morning and shot. Yet with all this we were merry as hay-sequins. Ask "Caleb" if he remembers the time he cured his messmate by measuring him for his coffin after the doctor had given him a heavy dose of jalops.

But excuse us, the boys of the war will not be with you long. Bear with us, we are growing old, and of course gurrulous, as this writing maybe shows. Allow us our reminiscences. We each one helped, in his way, to hold up the flag of our country in its peril. Honor and remember the dead. We still living have the satisfaction of knowing that no grander flag floats than that of the United States of America.

Since writing the above I have a letter from Thomas J. Orr, also inviting me to attend the reunion of Company D, and write a piece about the "Lynchburg raid." He says "Joe Doarns," "Caleb," "Sheller," "Poneback," "Pompey," "Garmouth" and many others will be there. Some he mentions will not be there—their lights are out. And as we will be boys, however enfeebled, old and gray, I will answer the roll call under the army name of

"OLD WHIT."

PROCTOR MAY GET IT.

A General Feeling that He Will Succeed Edmunds in the Senate.

ST. JOHNSBURY, VT., Aug. 12.—Gov. Page has issued a proclamation for a special session of the Legislature to convene Tuesday, August 25. The first cause for calling is to take action in regard to direct tax money due the State. Governor Page says there appears to be a strong public sentiment calling for further legislation upon the subject of the Columbian Exposition and gives the question prominence in the call. Five thousand dollars was appropriated last fall, but this sum will undoubtedly be handsomely increased by another appropriation when the Legislature convenes. It is now believed that Governor Page will make known his choice of a successor to Senator Edmunds before the extra session meets. As far as can be ascertained the State is substantially a unit in support of Secretary Proctor for the position.

The First Suit in the Court.

SAN FRANCISCO, Aug. 12.—The first suit brought in the new United States Court of Appeals was filed to-day. It is an appeal of the United States District Attorney at San Diego from the decision of the lower court releasing the schooner Robert and Minnie, which was libeled for transfering arms and munitions of war to a Chilean steamer.

Wants His Marriage Annulled.

KANSAS CITY, Mo., Aug. 12.—Courtland Riley, the 18-year-old bridegroom who was abducted by his mother and aunt while on his way to St. Louis Saturday with his bride of two weeks, has been persuaded by his relatives to begin suit for the annulling of the marriage.

A Traveling Man Saves a Woman's Life.

A traveling man, stopping at the Lee House, Campbellsburg, Ind., on learning that a lady in the village was suffering terribly with cramp colic, gave the landlady a bottle of medicine, which he had with him and requested her to take it to the sick woman. The medicine relieved her promptly and she believes saved her life; it was Chamberlain's Colic, Cholera and Diarrhoea Remedy, the promptest and most reliable medicine in use for bowel complaints. For sale by C. R. Goetze, W. W. Irwin, John Klari, C. Schnepf, C. Menkemeller, W. S. McCullough, M. W. Heinrici, W. E. Williams, S. L. Brice, John Coleman and W. H. Williams, Wheeling, W. Va. Bowie & Co., Bridgeport, Ohio. B. F. Peabody, Benwood, W. Va. D&W

Jules Simon never uses tobacco or liquor. This self-denial on the part of famous French economist does not seem to have any appreciable effect upon the market for these luxuries.

BUSINESS CARDS.

FINANCIAL.

CORNICE AND TIN ROOFING.